



# Link Up!

**“Who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this ?”  
Esther 4: 14**

## Notices

Just another reminder that our Church Members' AGM is on Wednesday 23rd March at 7.30pm and that there will also be a Special Church Members' meeting at the beginning of the evening where a proposal by the deacons about letting the manse during the Pastoral Vacancy will be discussed. All Church Members should have already received their Agendas and other paperwork for the meeting. Please make a special effort to attend the meeting as several of the members have already mentioned they will be unable to attend. Apologies for absence can be given to Janet before the meeting.

## Toby & Alissa's Cambodian adventure

On Sunday 27th March, which is Mothering Sunday, Toby & Alissa Ford, our two teenagers, will be telling us about their proposed trip to Cambodia with a school party to get involved with community projects there. They need to raise quite a lot of money to pay for this. After the service they will be serving teas/coffees and home-made cakes and we are asking you to make a donation for these towards their project. They will also have cakes available for sale for you to take home to eat. Please bring some money with you that week to help with this.



*Dear Church family,*

One of my favourite books in the Old Testament is the book of Esther, partly because there are so few other books in the Bible where a woman has a significant role! It's a story that has some quite difficult themes for those of us who are living in the 21st Century and in our culture to get to grips with. The Jews were several generations into their exile from their home land. Then a Jewish man encourages his young female relative to enter a beauty pageant to choose a new queen to replace one who had been put to death by the king! There is the threat of racially motivated genocide. Then there's the small matter of God never being actually mentioned in the book at all!

He may not have been mentioned but his hand is very much in evidence throughout the story. So, for those of you who don't know the main story, these are just the highlights. Mordecai and Esther are Jews living in the Persian capital of Susa when the king decides to 'get a new model' for a wife (one who'll do what he tells her to). Esther enters the contest to become queen and conceals the fact that she is a Jew. She goes to live in the harem of the king.

### **Graham Young's Thanksgiving Service**

You will remember that before Christmas we had to postpone the planned Thanksgiving Service for the life of Graham Young because of the high rates of COVID. This has now been rearranged for Wednesday 20th April at 2pm at the church. After the service there will be a cream tea and time to chat to the family and friends who come along. Janet is looking for offers of help with serving teas and coffees on the day and also for anyone who would be willing to help steward at the door, helping people to find their seats and directing them to the 'facilities'. If you are available to help with this please contact Janet on 01202 676708 or see her in church.

### **Pastoral Care in the Pastoral Vacancy.**

The deacons are still looking for someone who would be willing to co-ordinate the pastoral care network during the Pastoral Vacancy. This does not mean doing all the Pastoral Care yourself but putting people in touch with others who may be able to support each other, even if this is just by a phone call occasionally. Perhaps God has put this on your heart at the moment? Please don't be shy, come and have a chat with Janet about what you could do.

Meanwhile the king's senior courtier, Haman, is given a high place of honour in the kingdom and expects everyone to bow down to him. Everyone except Mordecai, who obviously knew he shouldn't bow down to anyone but God, did and Haman decided to get even by not just killing Mordecai but all his people as well.

Eventually Mordecai appeals to Esther to intervene and, although initially afraid to do so, she asks Mordecai and his fellow Jews to pray and then she goes to see the king. After using 'the way to a man's heart is through his stomach' route, she eventually persuades the king to allow the Jews to defend themselves against the coming slaughter and Haman get's his just rewards.

What I like about this story is that it isn't a rose-tinted story about when everything in the characters' lives is going wonderfully. It's about people who were experiencing trials and being put to the test but it's also about how God puts people in the right place at the right time to fulfil his purposes even if that takes a lot of courage. It also shows us how powerful the prayers of God's people are in protecting and empowering those who need this.

Do you feel as if you as a Christian are being tested at the moment and you can't see a way forward? Perhaps that is also true for us as a church at the moment. The lesson we learn from Esther is that God has put each of us where we are the moment. We learn that God has a plan for each of our lives and that, if we are willing, he can use us to serve his purposes and bring about his wider plan for us and those around us. We also learn that this sometimes means we have to be courageous and attempt things that may seem impossible to us, until we remember that God is there alongside us.

God bless,

*Janet*